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SUBJECT: HIRC Chairman Lantos Meeting with Russian Security Council Secretary Ivanov

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1. (SBU) Summary: In a February 19 meeting with Russian Security Council Secretary Ivanov, HIRC Chairman Lantos announced his intent to introduce legislation repealing Jackson-Vanik and inaugurate a formal congressional working group with Russian Duma Chairman of the International Relations Committee. On Iran, Ivanov undertook to encourage Iranian support for a Lantos visit, described a nuclear Iran as unacceptable, expressed frustration with Iranian refusal to accept a "time out," and conditioned the fuel delivery of Bushehr on the "developing situation" -- adding that Russia would not "complicate" the situation. Ivanov reviewed Russian opposition to the Ahtisaari plan for Kosovo, said early action in the UNSC would complicate matters, and noted the effect on the frozen conflicts. On the Middle East, Lantos underscored that a Palestinian National Unity Government would have to "subscribe" to the three conditions, and urged Russia to persuade Syria to choose between the civilized world and Iran. Lantos expressed strong concern over Russian weapon sales to Syria, with Ivanov defending GOR end-user controls. Lantos told Ivanov that NATO could handle Afghanistan, if Allies and their partners in ISAF members shed their "caveats" on the rules of engagement. End Summary

GOR View of Bilateral Relations

2. (SBU) In a February 19 meeting with Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Lantos and the Ambassador, Russian Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov joked that US-Russian relations "were not as bad" as they appeared, but that Russia could not help but be disturbed by the discrepancy that existed between the accomplishments and the current atmosphere. Putin, he noted, had instructed Duma Chairman Boris Gryzlov to intensify contacts with his American counterparts, and the GOR recognized that it had neglected to pay enough attention to a congressional dialogue. In other remedial steps, the GOR had recently approved a bilateral non-governmental working group on human rights chaired by Human Rights Ombudsman Vladimir Lukin and Carnegie Washington Director Jessica Matthews, and was examining the creation of a working group "of veterans," seeking to tap into the expertise of former Prime Minister Primakov and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (who visits Russia again in March). While this group would be unofficial, the goal was to deepen the strategic dialogue. Ivanov invited Lantos to visit Moscow frequently, joking that the Chairman was the only one of his colleagues not running for President.

3. (SBU) Lantos expressed appreciation for GOR hospitality during his visit and said he viewed his consultations in the context of post-Munich, referring to the speech by Putin, severely criticizing U.S. policy. In order to redress the imbalance in the relationship, Lantos previewed his intention to introduce legislation repealing Jackson-Vanik, which he would announce in a February 21 press conference. Furthermore, following his February 20 meeting with Duma Chairman of the International Relations Committee Konstantin Kosachev, Lantos said he would announce the creation of a formal parliamentary working group, which would meet on a regular basis,

and help kick-start a constructive dialogue. Lantos pledged to devote considerable energy to improving US-Russian relations.

14. (SBU) Ivanov, noting recent accomplishments in WTO and "123" negotiations, on-going cooperation in the Quartet, and the establishment of the Global Initiative on Combating Nuclear Terrorism, asked the Chairman for his frank assessment of the prospects for the repeal of Jackson-Vanik. Ivanov hastened to add that the GOR understood the legislation was symbolic, noting that Russia had lived with the amendment for a long time, and could continue to do so. Lantos responded that he would do everything in his power to enact the repeal, noting that he was uniquely qualified to take up this task and would be "very surprised" if he did not succeed. Ivanov underscored the GOR's appreciation for his efforts, and Lantos stressed that it was an antidote to the Putin speech.

Iran: Tougher Talk

15. (SBU) Lantos expressed frustration over the Iranian regime's refusal to issue visas to Members of the U.S. Congress, noting that he was last in Iran during the Shah's reign. Despite his efforts, and those of former UNSYG Annan, Iran refused to budge from this policy, which Lantos labeled counterproductive. Ivanov expressed surprise over the restriction, particularly in the wake of former President Khatami's visit to New York, and undertook to raise the issue directly with the Iranian leadership, including Security Adviser Larijani. Lantos reiterated that he was prepared to travel to Iran at any time for a serious conversation.

16. (SBU) Ivanov updated Lantos on the status of GOR efforts to engage the Iranian regime, noting that this was done in close consultation with the U.S. The GOR did not want "under any circumstance" to see the emergence of a nuclear Iran, which was unacceptable to all of the governments in the region for differing reasons. This point was underscored to Putin during his

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consultations in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan. Not only would it upset the stability of the Gulf, but it would fatally compromise the nonproliferation regime. Because of GOR concern, Ivanov stressed, the GOR had voted for UNSCR 1737, since all levers had to be employed. The results of the six-party talks with the DPRK demonstrated that, while difficult, negotiations were the best and rational way to achieve a lasting solution.

17. (SBU) Ivanov expressed exasperation with the Iranian leadership, noting that the 12 hour negotiating sessions were "no picnic," and contrasting the Iranians unfavorably with other infamous negotiating partners, including Hafiz al-Asad, Hussein, and Milosevic. Unlike the North Koreans, the Iranians were not clear about their objectives. Ivanov questioned why Iran would seek to develop a full nuclear fuel cycle capability, noting that "if the situation develops favorably" Russia was prepared to provide the fuel for Bushehr. The Iranians had no other nuclear power plants, and no immediate prospects for acquiring them, so their refusal to take up El-Baradei's offer of a "time out" was incomprehensible. Putin and other senior GOR leaders consistently warned the Iranian leaders that their failure to answer questions over their nuclear program would only result in specialists concluding that it was for military purposes. "And that is unacceptable to us." The GOR would continue to promote a "time out," which could give the IAEA the time necessary to resolve its outstanding questions.

18. (SBU) Ivanov described a new UNSC resolution as "unavoidable" if the Iranian stance did not change, which the GOR had communicated to the Iranian leadership, and specifically tied timing of the delivery of Bushehr fuel to progress in addressing international demands. Repeating that "we'll make a decision in light of the developing situation," Ivanov sidestepped Lantos' query on how long Russia was prepared to delay. Ivanov added that much would depend on a new resolution. Lantos underscored that the longer Russia delayed, the better, while Ivanov undertook that Russia "won't do anything that complicates the situation." "We will be prudent." Ivanov noted the practical difficulties that Russia faced -- a workforce (half Ukrainian, half Russian) of 2,500, and

possible legal exposure on commercial agreements -- but said that "is not the major issue." While theoretically the delivery of fuel was tied to IAEA technical assessments, Ivanov underscored that the decision was political. "If the situation worsens, the supply of fuel will be threatened." Ivanov urged a continuous dialogue on the part of the U.S. and EU3. "We will all be winners in the end: it doesn't matter who takes the lead."

¶9. (SBU) Iran's regional ambitions complicated the picture further. Ivanov argued that allowing Iran to participate in the resolution of regional issues, such as Lebanon, was one way of showing the leadership that nuclear weapons were not a prerequisite for being taken seriously by the international community. In Afghanistan and Tajikistan, the GOR had worked productively with the Iranian regime, and Ivanov pointed to the Saudi and Iranian brokered agreement in Lebanon as a step forward, while withholding judgment on whether the compromise would hold. The GOR believed that Iran really sought a direct dialogue with the U.S., and Ivanov commented that Lantos' proposed trip would be a "very interesting step" in this light. Lantos noted his role in opening a dialogue with the DPRK that preceded the regime's return to the six-party negotiations and reiterated his hope that Iran sought a serious dialogue. The advantage of a congressionally-led dialogue was that it could be viewed as official, semi-official, or private, depending upon the needs of the interlocutors. The Iranian ban on visas, he repeated, was utterly irrational. Ivanov undertook again to raise the issue.

Kosovo: No Hurry

¶10. (SBU) Ivanov reviewed GOR concerns over the Ahtisaari proposal, and the UN Special Envoy's propensity for "rapid solutions," noting that any outcome should be lasting and acceptable to all the parties. Ivanov argued that it would have been possible to enforce a solution at the end of the war, but now "we have what we have." Under the current proposal, Ivanov asserted that the Kosovars had all their historical demands answered, "beyond their wildest dreams," while the Serbs lost. Ivanov pushed for continued negotiations, arguing that the Serbs recognized that they could not live with the Albanian Kosovars and that a dignified solution was still possible. A quick move to the UNSC would "complicate the situation" and there was no reason to hurry. The Kosovars enjoyed de facto independence, their economy was growing, and their children were matriculating in Kosovar schools and universities. Bosnia had taken ten years to reach a negotiated settlement and EUFOR was still in place. A solution to Kosovo, with its complicated inter-ethnic disputes, could not be hurried. Russia, Ivanov insisted, was not trying to artificially delay a settlement, but was convinced that the proposed solution was out of balance. Ivanov added that the international community never addressed the plight of Serb refugees.

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¶11. (SBU) Ivanov stressed that Russia was concerned by the parallels between Kosovo and Abkhazia, as well as other frozen conflicts. Lawyers could state that it was not a precedent, but "life contradicts." Ivanov pointed to developments in Moldova, where 600-800,000 residents had acquired Romanian passports. Transnistrians, who did not accept a Romanian identity, would point to their own resolution and unique history as justification for an Ahtisaari-style solution.

Middle East Peace, Syrian Weapon Sales

¶12. (SBU) Lantos noted the difficult situation in the Middle East, his extended conversation with Palestinian PM Abbas, and disappointment over the National Unity Government (NUG), which he termed a move in a negative direction that left U.S. efforts to assist the Palestinians "up in the air." Lantos noted emphatically that the U.S. would not deal with a government that was made up of terrorists. Ivanov noted Russian interest in the NUG, which Abbas had briefed Putin on during their meeting in Jordan. Ivanov suggested that the NUG's "recognition" of previous agreements could be read as an affirmation of Israel's existence and repudiation of

terrorism. Lantos rejected this formulation, noting that the new Palestinian government would have to specifically subscribe to the three conditions. Anything short of that would "not fly a millimeter" in the U.S. Congress.

¶13. (SBU) In response to Ivanov's question on the possibility of Israeli-Syrian contacts, Lantos detailed his conversations in Lebanon, where Syrian intimidation made calls for the stationing of UN forces along the Syrian-Lebanon border impossible. Stressing that he did not oppose engagement with the Syrians, Lantos noted that he did not attach much hope to the process. It was up to Syria to decide whether to be constructive and live in the civilized world, or to play Iran's game. Lantos urged the GOR to underscore the same message with Asad. Iran was the single most dangerous phenomenon on the planet, and the Syrian regime needed to understand this point.

¶14. (SBU) Lantos noted his deep concern over Russian military shipments to Syria. While the GOR pointed to its end-user restrictions, the U.S. knew that weapons were transferred to Hizbollah. Ivanov reiterated that Russia opposed the transfer of weapons to Hizbollah, which had occurred when Syria vacated Lebanon, and had taken measures to intensify the monitoring of weapons sold to the Asad regime. While Olmert spoke of Russian missiles falling into Hizbollah hands, there was no proof presented. Russian military sales did not threaten the region's stability, and the GOR was transparent in its dealings with the Israeli government, alerting them to the kinds of weapons supplied.

Afghanistan: Moving beyond "caveats"

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¶15. (SBU) Referring to his recent trip to Afghanistan, Lantos said the biggest challenge was the unwillingness of many NATO Allies and ISAF partners to step up to the plate. "Caveats" on the roles of military engagement meant that the largest burden fell on the British, Canadians, Danes, and Dutch. NATO was capable of addressing the threat in Afghanistan, but only if the ISAF dilemma on caveats was resolved. Lantos decried the risk averse calculation of some NATO Allies and partners, but pointed to the strong U.S. commitment, including the decision by the President to send 3,000 troops originally destined for Iraq to Afghanistan to preempt the spring offensive.

¶16. (SBU) Noting that NATO wouldn't be in Afghanistan forever, Ivanov emphasized the importance of developing Afghanistan's military, internal, and police forces, and expressed concern over the diminution in the role of the Tajiks. The Tajiks were the natural counter to the extremist forces in Afghanistan. While Russia was not active in Afghanistan, it was prepared to cooperate, particularly when it came to the north.

¶17. (SBU) Chairman Lantos cleared this message.

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